





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

	ACTIVE THREATS	
	POLICY NUMBER: 46-2	ISSUING AUTHORITY 
	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025	Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Situations involving active threats, including physical and cyber threats, can occur in any environment including such settings as educational campuses, malls, businesses, special events, and workplaces. An analysis of such attacks over the last decade reveals that suspects are often heavily armed with semi-automatic pistols, high-powered rifles, body armor, and ample supplies of ammunition for extended engagement. In addition, assailants may use a vehicle as a weapon and inflict mass injuries and casualties. Early prevention and preparation by police, in coordination with other City departments, may help thwart such events and mitigate their affects when they do occur.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to:

- A. invest in training and prevention efforts to anticipate, thwart, and mitigate any active threat that may occur;
- B. respond immediately with any legal means necessary to protect the lives of community members from an active threat that could result in serious bodily injury or death;
- C. contain and stop the threat, arrest suspects, evacuate victims, and provide for medical attention if necessary; and
- D. protect the crime scene for follow-up investigation and prosecution.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Active Threat*: Any deliberate incident that poses an immediate danger to others, in a confined and populated area, often with no pattern or method to the selection of victims. Although these events usually involve the use of firearms, they may also involve the use of other types of weapons or implements with the intent to cause harm.

- B. *Barricaded Subject*: The standoff created by an armed or potentially armed subject in any location, whether fortified or not, who is refusing to comply with police demands to surrender.
- C. *Contact Team*: An officer or group of officers whose primary mission is to stop the threat and prevent the escape of the suspect(s).
- D. *NTOA*: National Tactical Officers Association.
- E. *Rapid Deployment*: The swift and immediate deployment of police personnel and resources to an ongoing, life-threatening, situation where delayed deployment could result in the death or serious bodily injury to innocent persons.
- F. *Rescue Team*: A group of officers or other personnel assigned to locate, recover, and facilitate the evacuation of victims to safe areas or to medical personnel for treatment.
- G. *SRT*: Special Response Team.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Authority to Use Force
 - 1. Any use of force deployed in an active threat situation shall follow the same directives and guidelines as set forth in department policy on Use of Force.
 - 2. Patrol rifles shall only be deployed by officers authorized to do so and who are trained in their use.
 - 3. Ballistic shields and other armor, such as, but not limited to, Kevlar helmets and ballistic blankets, may be deployed in active threat events.
- B. Jurisdictional Considerations and Mutual Aid
 - 1. Department officers have jurisdictional authority to respond to active threats within the geographical boundaries of the City and in any other jurisdiction when authorized in a mutual aid agreement, as part of an authorized task force, or by request according to M.G.L c. 41, § 99 related to the requisition of officers by one jurisdiction to another.
- C. Prevention/Preemptive Activities
 - 1. Adhering to the department's core values, engagement with the community, and good intelligence can help to identify and subvert a threat.
 - 2. Behavior analysis is a tool available to department officers to identify persons who may present a threat to the community.
 - 3. Technology, when available and authorized, can help to identify and subvert an attack. Members of the department may request the Command Staff to review emerging technologies used in this regard.
- D. Notifications for Awareness and Safety

1. Broadcasting alerts/Dispatcher responsibilities.
 - a. The department will broadcast alerts according to policy. (See policy 54-3 Community Alerts.)
 2. If time allows, social media may be used to provide information to the public regarding the threat.
 - a. Such messages may provide direction, assurances when appropriate, and an all-clear message upon confirmation that the suspects are in custody.
- E. Notification of Additional Public Safety Departments and Other Resources
1. Dispatch shall notify other law enforcement agencies through BAPERN of an event involving an active threat as soon as practical.
 2. In emergency situations, the Police Commissioner may request federal or National Guard assistance through the Secretary of Public Safety and Security of the Commonwealth.
- F. Response to Threats When Lives are in Imminent Danger
1. Identification and Confirmation of the Threat
 - a. Initial incoming information that a possible active threat may be developing can come from a variety of sources including community members, law enforcement officers, or social media.
 - b. When an active threat is reported, the department will respond immediately as it attempts to confirm the reported threat either by eyewitness reports or multiple corroborating non-eyewitness reports.
 2. Responsibilities of Dispatch
 - a. Send as many officers as available to or toward the reported location keeping in mind the possibility that a secondary threat may develop.
 - b. If it does not place the caller in danger, stay on the phone with the initial caller as long as possible.
 - c. Notify the Shift Commander, who will make further notifications as necessary, as soon as possible.
 - d. Broadcast known information as it is received including location, description, direction of travel of the threat if moving, the number of suspects identified, and a description of any weapons or explosives if known.
 - e. Notify Emergency Medical Services, Cambridge Fire Department, Mass State Police, and any other resources that may be required to respond.
 3. Responsibilities of First Responding Officers
 - a. Locate the suspect and stop the threat.

- b. Communicate with dispatch regarding the location and nature of the threat if known.
 - c. Maximize threat coverage using available personnel and visually search using 540-degrees of coverage around and above.
 - d. Differentiate between a slow search when there is no active threat present and a direct-to-threat search when there is an active threat present.
- 4. Responsibilities of Secondary Responding Officers
 - a. Establish a command post, begin transmitting information for public notifications, and establish containment.
 - b. Establish inner and outer perimeters to prevent suspects from leaving without challenge; provide cover for other personnel; divert vehicular traffic from the perimeter; and report observations that are significant to terminating the threat and for the investigation.
 - c. Deploy rescue teams and provide for evacuation of injured persons.
 - d. Coordinate with the Cambridge Fire Department and EMS to establish a triage area to evaluate, treat, and transport victims.
- 5. Rescue Teams
 - a. Locate, recover, and facilitate the evacuation of victims to safe areas or to medical personnel for treatment.
 - b. If possible, and more than two officers are performing the rescue, both forward and rear cover should be provided.
- 6. Evacuation and Medical Response
 - a. EMS will establish a location for triage, immediate treatment, and transport of victims to local hospitals.
 - b. Depending on the number of victims requiring transport to a hospital, dispatch will communicate with one or more hospitals in the area to determine emergency room availability.
- G. Public Sheltering and Containment of the Incident
 - 1. During an active threat, the need may arise for sheltering and reunification of victims with families as well as the need to identify witnesses. Command Staff will assess the need for sheltering based on the size and proximity to the event and will activate an appropriate shelter as quickly as possible.
- H. Barricaded Suspects
 - 1. Not all suspects who refuse to surrender are considered barricaded. A barricaded suspect is defined within the following limited criteria.
 - a. The suspect is probably armed.

- b. The suspect is believed to have been involved in a criminal act or is a significant threat to the lives and safety of citizens and/or police.
 - c. The suspect is in a position of advantage, affording cover and concealment; or is contained in an open area and the presence or approach of police officers could precipitate an adverse reaction by the suspect.
 - d. The suspect refuses to submit to arrest.
 2. Once the above criteria are met, the department may call for additional resources from other regional, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies if needed.
 3. Until a specialized unit arrives, department officers should respond with the Four C's.
 - a. *Containment*: All sides of the location should be covered; the Incident Commander should establish a perimeter and restrict access to the area by unauthorized persons. Good cover provides protection from gunfire as well as concealment.
 - b. *Control*: Control of the suspect is of paramount concern; the suspect should be prevented from having any outside contact. An officer(s) should be assigned to control the movement of witnesses and/or victims as well as any other pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Evacuate adjoining rooms and buildings. Establish a Command Post.
 - c. *Communication*: Establish a dedicated radio channel and limit radio traffic to essential information; the Incident Commander should use a telephone when possible. An attempt should be made to communicate with the suspect to encourage surrender. In the event of a hostage situation, all efforts should be made to prevent the suspect from moving the hostage. The Incident Commander should notify SRT that a hostage is involved. SRT personnel will immediately dispatch members of the Crisis Negotiation Team along with the initial SRT response.
 - d. *Call SRT*: Dealing with barricaded suspects is one of the specific assignments SWAT is trained for. SRT has the role of providing tactical solutions to the Incident Commander and, if requested by the IC, will employ a tactical plan to resolve the incident.
 4. The Shift Commander will request the use of the SRT Team through the on-duty Deputy Superintendent or Duty Chief who call for the activation of the Special Response Team and the Crisis Negotiation Team.
 5. The Cambridge Police Department Special Response Team uses the NTOA recommendations as guidelines.
- I. Virtual Threats
 1. Cyber-attacks reported to the police department should be reported immediately to Public Safety Information Technology and Information Security who will assess the nature of the attack and communicate with the Police Commissioner and the City Emergency Manager to coordinate a response plan.

2. Command staff will coordinate initial reporting and coordination with applicable City departments who will put in place a response.
3. If a cyber-attack can disrupt police department and/or any technology infrastructure in the City in a way that causes safety and security risks, such as building security, life and safety systems, research equipment, and hazardous materials, the department will respond according to City of Cambridge IT policy.

J. Post Incident Debriefing and Documentation

1. The incident shall be fully documented in an incident report to include:
 - a. injuries to any persons;
 - b. use of weapons;
 - c. any property damage;
 - d. a detailed report of the tactical aspects of the operation and all pertinent information required for follow-up by investigators, prosecutors, or persons involved;
 - e. a full account and sequence of the incident; and
 - f. statements by witnesses.
2. Post incident, at a time to be determined by a member of the Command Staff, the department will conduct a debrief to consider the well-being of officers involved and to discuss the incident. The debrief may be used for training purposes but will not be recorded or documented in a written report. Types of debriefs to be utilized may include one or more of the following.
 - a. A *hotwash*/immediate after-action/safety review.
 - b. A *tactical debrief*/an incident overview.
 - c. An *incident debrief*/an incident learning module.

K. Counseling

1. The department Peer Support Team will be available to all effected personnel.
2. Command staff will call for the assistance of the Regional CISM Team if necessary.

L. Training

1. Even though active threats of the magnitude addressed in this policy are extremely rare, when an incident does occur, highly trained personnel are required to deliver an immediate, decisive, and precise response.
2. Therefore, it is incumbent on the department to stay prepared at a high level commensurate with the possible threat.
3. Active threat training shall be an integral part of the training regimen provided to department officers. The Training and Certification Unit and Operations Commander will work with

members of a training cadre, including medical, firearms, defensive tactics, ALERT, and law, to develop and deliver this training.

M. Documented Annual Review of Policy and Training Needs

1. Annually, the appropriate Deputy Superintendent shall ensure that members of the department shall review this policy and any recommended training for department personnel.
2. The review may consider recommendations to purchase and use new technology to aid in the identification and prevention of threats to City of Cambridge community members.
3. Training on active threats is recognized as a perishable skill. Applicable training should be reviewed annually for best practices and implemented on an annual basis.